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Watchman for the CIA

Representative Zablocki is persisting with his argument that the central intelligence agency should account to someone for its activities. The Milwaukee Democrat has proposed once again that the CIA be checked by a committee of congress—just as the atomic energy commission is—and that an effort be made to prevent overlapping of the activities of the CIA and our other intelligence agencies.

These proposals have been made many times but the superspies have thus far been able to convince congress that their activities are so secret and so explosive that it would be dangerous to security if anyone checked them.

Occasional CIA blunders have made it quite apparent that in the national interest there should be a congressional check on the agency's activities. Time and again the CIA has actually been making policy in nations abroad—and often policy that conflicts with our regular foreign policy.

Take a rather ridiculous example: A few years ago the state and agricultural departments organized a team of experts on co-operatives. It was to go to Latin America to help nations set up co-operatives—a type of mutual help useful in our own agricultural areas. The team was given briefings. The CIA man who briefed it told the experts that the CIA opposed co-operatives—at home as well as abroad. The CIA, then, as expressed by this representative, opposed policy set by two cabinet level departments.

If a congressional committee checked on the CIA and other intelligence agencies, national security requirements would control. There would still be secrets, as there have been in the field of atomic energy. But the congressmen would know more about what the CIA is up to, how much it spends and how necessary the expenditures are. It could serve as a curb on policy making, and could insist that the CIA stick strictly to its cloak and dagger business.

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